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No. IV.

PREVENTING FRAUDULENT ERASURES IN
BANKERS' CHECQUES.

The Thanks of the Society were this Session voted to Mr. JOSEPH FINCHER, Assistant Secretary to the Royal Institution of Great Britain, for his proposed plan for preventing FRAUDULENT ERASURES IN BANKERS' CHECQUES.

INSTANCES not unfrequently occur of frauds being committed on bankers by persons who, having got possession of a cheque drawn for a small amount, discharge, by certain well known chemical applications, the words and figures that indicate the sum, and substitute a larger in its place. In order to prevent this, cheques are often printed on tinted paper, liable to be discoloured by the substances usually applied to discharge the writing, and therefore rendering obvious any attempt at falsification. The perverse ingenuity of those who benefit from such frauds has, however, frequently evaded this obstacle; and an easy and effectual method of detection is still a desideratum.

The plan proposed by Mr. Fincher is extremely simple, is attended with no additional cost, and if put in practice is an absolute preventative against any serious loss on the part of the drawer or of the banker. It consists in having nine parallel lines drawn longitudinally over the face of the cheque, and in printing at the beginning of the first line the word ten, at the beginning of the second line the

word twenty, and so on to the last, which is indicated by the word ninety. The sum drawn for is to be placed on that line the number of which corresponds with that of the tens in the sum itself, and the signature is to be also placed on the same line. Thus if the sum 85*l.* 13*s.* 6*d.* is drawn for, it is to be written on the line marked eighty, the signature being on the same, according to the annexed diagram.

The utmost, therefore, that a fraudulent person can obtain, by erasing the sum drawn for and substituting another, is the difference between the former and the largest sum which can be placed on the same line.

It will be necessary to have three sets of cheques,—the first for sums below £100, the next for sums below £1000, and the last for sums below £10,000; and this necessity on the part of the drawer, of having three sets of cheque-books, will be some additional trouble to him. Another objection is, that some persons, from carelessness or want of previous instruction, have contracted so irregular and straggling a mode of writing, especially of signing their names, as to be incapable of writing it on a straight line without such a difference in the character of the hand as to occasion doubts, on the part of the banker or his clerks, of the authenticity of such signature.

How far these objections, which appear to be only accidental, should be allowed to weigh against a plan possessed of so much intrinsic merit and simplicity, can perhaps be duly estimated only by professional men, to the deliberate and candid consideration of whom the Society take the liberty of recommending it.